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**WASHINGTON, DC-** U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon voted tonight to raise the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour over the course of two years. The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 (H. R. 2) overwhelmingly passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 315 to 116 and now heads to the Senate for approval.

**"America offers enormous opportunity for those who work hard and obey the law, but millions of citizens who put in a hard day's work are still living in poverty. In the richest nation in the world this should not be the case," Rep. Melancon said. "I've been the owner of several small businesses in south Louisiana, so I personally understand how hard it can be for small businesses to make ends meet. However, no employee can be expected to survive on just \$10,700 a year, which is the current annual earnings for fulltime minimum wage workers. I believe the best way to get Americans off of welfare is to make they can earn a meaningful and fair wage if they put in a full day's work. I am proud to vote to give millions of hard-working American's a raise, and I urge the Senate and President to support this bill."**

H. R. 2 will directly benefit over 274,000 workers in Louisiana who currently earn less than \$7.25 an hour. Nearly 13 million people nationwide would likely benefit from the increase - 5.6 million directly and 7.4 million indirectly. This includes 7.7 million women, 3.4 million parents, and 4.7 million people of color.

The federal minimum wage has not increased in more than nine years - the longest period in the history of the law. As a result, the real value of the minimum wage has plummeted to its lowest level in 51 years. If the minimum wage was equal to what it was at its highest point in 1968, it would be \$9.05 per hour today. In 2005, the average corporate CEO in America was paid 821 times as much as a minimum wage earner -- earning more before lunchtime on the very first day at work than a minimum wage worker earns all year.

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